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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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FOR VICTOR VOCKERODT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ALLEGED CHILD TRAFFICKING FROM MOZAMBIQUE TO SOUTH AFRICA

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A South African NGO, Amazing Grace Children's Center, based in the town of Malelane near the border with Mozambique, is sheltering half a dozen children that appear to have been trafficked from Mozambique into South Africa. This Center says it has been working with trafficking victims - mainly children - for several years, and seems quite active in a campaign to combat trafficking. Emboff visited the Center on May 4 and gained preliminary information about its work and the dimensions of the child trafficking problem. Police in South Africa, particularly the Child Protection Unit in the nearby provincial capital of Nelspruit, are supportive of the Center and eager to assist. Working in close coordination with Embassy Pretoria, we would like to follow this initial visit with further contact to learn more and see what steps can be taken on both sides of the border to start to address the problem of child trafficking. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Emboff visited Amazing Grace Children's Center in Malelane, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa on May 4 to investigate reports of child trafficking from Mozambique to South Africa. He met with the Center's director, Grace Mashaba, and toured the few buildings on the premises. In making the visit emboff was following up on some leads provided by Justina Cumbe, the Mozambican director of a local NGO in Maputo, FECIV, active in women's and children's rights issues. This visit was coordinated in advance with Embassy Pretoria.

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Amazing Grace Children's Center  
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3. (U) Mashaba, a Malawian by birth and formerly a child farm worker in the area, started the Center more than a decade ago as a haven for street children. She told emboff that in the past several years the Center has taken in child trafficking victims, most of them from Mozambique but some from other neighboring countries. The Center staff try to locate their families and arrange their return. In the interim, the children are given shelter, food, and rudimentary schooling (though much of the schooling is provided by the local school system). The Center receives support from the South African government of 22 Rand (roughly three and a half dollars) per child per day. This is welcome but inadequate, and the Center relies on supplementary outside donations to get by.

4. (U) The Center's location is on Factory Street (exact number not given) in the small town of Malelane, telephone 27-13-790-0423, fax 27-13-790-1789. Ms. Grace Mashaba's cell phone is 27-82-494-9709. The email address for the Center is agch@soft.co.za. There is a Johannesburg branch office, also known as the Amazing Grace Children's Center. The telephone number for this branch is 011-9488-920; its street address was not given.

5. (U) At the time of emboff's visit, Mashaba said, there were seven Mozambican children at the Center, all of them, evidently, the victims of trafficking. Five were away attending school in the town but emboff saw one of the other two.

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Peace Corps Helping Out  
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6. (U) While at the Center, emboff met a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer working there. She will be leaving in September. Her predecessor, according to Mashaba, after leaving the Center in 2003 went to work on child trafficking issues in Egypt.

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Children on Farms  
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7. (SBU) Mashaba claimed that "hundreds" of Mozambican children were working in surrounding farms in the area, some of them trafficking victims. (Note: According to Mashaba, under South African law one must be 18 years of age to work as a laborer on a farm. End note.). The odd child, who for some reason was not wanted on a farm, occasionally arrived at her Center, after being found abandoned in the area and brought in by local authorities. Mashaba said that local police were helpful in this regard, mainly because they did not want loose kids wandering the streets. She was not

popular with farmers, however. She added that that afternoon she was going to "help bury" a Mozambican woman who had died on a farm earlier, and then would be making arrangements with the farmer for the children. She added that she planned in the near future to approach labor unions working among the farm laborers about the problem of trafficked children there.

18. (SBU) In the midst of talking with Ms. Mashaba, emboff had an opportunity to speak by telephone with Inspector Shabangu of the Nelspruit Child Protection Unit, an ally of Mashaba's working in the nearby provincial capital of Nelspruit. He agreed that many Mozambican children were working for farmers in the area, many of them as "garden boys," and that child trafficking was a serious problem. Asked why local people did not often report incidences of child trafficking, he replied that many were relatively simple and uneducated, and accepted that others were "taking care" of the children. He welcomed contact with the US Embassy in Maputo, noting that there were instances of children from his area who went missing across the border in Mozambique. He hoped the Embassy could facilitate his making contacts with local Mozambican police in such circumstances. Inspector Shabangu can be reached by telephone at 27(0)83-688-1287.

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Raising Awareness  
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19. (U) The Amazing Grace Children's Center has initiated several activities to counter child trafficking in the past year, according to one of its brochures. In March 2004, in coordination with other local NGOs in the area and some from neighboring Mozambique, the Center organized a two-day conference on child trafficking in Hectorspruit, a farming community a dozen miles from Malelane. Emboff was given a copy of an article on the conference carried by the local paper, The Voice of Nkomazi. According to the article, "people are trafficked for a variety of purposes, such as sexual exploitation, forced labour or slavery, forced marriages, adoption or the removal of organs or other body parts." In January 2005 the Center organized a soccer tournament around the trafficking issue at the black township of Naas, near the main Mozambique/South Africa border crossing point of Ressano Garcia/Komatipoort. Inspector Shabangu attended and addressed the crowd. In April 2005 Mashaba organized a radio talk show on the subject of child trafficking.

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Through Swaziland  
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10. (SBU) According to Mashaba, most traffickers brought their victims into South Africa from Mozambique via Swaziland. She said that Swazi border controls were particularly weak.

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Transiting South Africa  
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11. (SBU) Mashaba added that many trafficking victims from the region were flown out of Johannesburg and Cape Town airport to other countries. Many immigration and customs officials were corrupt and so allowed this. She told emboff that recently two Zairian girls were brought in to her center when South African border police became suspicious. The girls were to have been sent overseas via Cape Town. They have since been returned to their family in Zaire.

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On the Mozambican Side  
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12. (U) Mashaba told emboff that the Center has used its own resources to repatriate seven children to Mozambique over the past several years. On May 17 emboff spoke with Lea Boaventura, regional coordinator of the Campaign Against Child Trafficking and deputy director of the Maputo branch of Terre des Hommes (a German NGO). According to her, in the past several months a Mozambican judge, Marcia Pinto, has taken responsibility for crimes against children and has traveled to meet her counterparts in South Africa on the problem of trafficked children. Ms. Boaventura is hopeful that she will be more attentive to helping reunite trafficked children with their families. She added that recently a woman police superintendent of Maputo's First Squad has begun several training workshops for other police officers on child trafficking, and that this should motivate the police to provide assistance in instances of child trafficking.

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Comment  
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13. (SBU) We would like to remain in contact with Amazing Grace Children's Center and Ms. Mashaba to learn more about the scope of the child trafficking problem and what can be done about it. We will coordinate our efforts closely with Embassy Pretoria. We will be meeting with FECIV, Terre des Hommes and other NGOs and officials on this end in our

efforts to encourage more action by the GRM.

14. (U) Embassy Pretoria has cleared on this report, but has reservations about whether the Mozambican children mentioned were indeed trafficked. In its opinion, further information is needed in order to reach this conclusion.

LA LIME